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ABSTRACT

This paper equates the variety of methods a social science bibliographer must use to build a useful and valuable research collection with the multiple approaches employed by detectives to solve crimes. Before presenting a sampling of strategies used by social science bibliographers, the paper defines the core disciplines of the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, geography, economics, history); suggests numerous applied social science fields (law, business and management, education, social work, urban planning, and criminal justice); and discusses multi-disciplinary fields (ethnic studies, women's studies, communication arts, and policy sciences). The bibliographic structure of the social science literature is briefly discussed and a more detailed review of tools to be used in the selection and acquisition of library materials is provided. This section is divided by types of materials: monographs, periodicals, proceedings and conference papers, alternative and non-traditional materials, and government publications and report literature. (THC)

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The Social Science Bibliographer as Detective: Selection Strategies for the Social Sciences

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A Paper Presented at the Anthropology and Sociology Section (ACRL) Annual Program, Dallas

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Introduction

In the introductory essay to his book The Sociologist As Detective, William Sanders compares the investigatory and analytical processes of sociologists and detectives. Surprisingly enough, Mr. Sanders finds many parallels between these two different professions. So, too, are there parallels between the work of detectives and social science bibliographers.

I have long felt that library research was much like detective work and have described it as such to my library instruction classes. But identifying the materials which will comprise our research collections is no less of a challenge. The literature of social science is diverse, frequently difficult to evaluate, and often difficult to acquire. Just as the detective must use multiple approaches and methods to piece together the "truth", so, too, must the social science bibliographer use a variety of methods to build useful and valuable research collections.

In addition, there is no single "right" way to build social science collections. I am currently editing the social science section of a book to be published next year

by the RTSD Resources Section called The Selection of Library Materials: Guides to Sources and Strategies.. Different strategies are employed by each of selectors. I will try, today, to provide you with a sampling of the strategies employed by Social Science bibliographers.

Defining the Field

In order to cover social science disciplines adequately, it is important to define the range and scope of subjects to be covered. Unlike many disciplines in the sciences and humanities, the literature of social science is both diverse and cross-disciplinary which adds to the complexity of the selection process. Since few academic institutions are able to assign different selectors to each discipline, most social science bibliographers have multiple selection responsibilities. While this aids in multi-disciplinary selection, it does not reduce the need to clearly define one's scope of responsiblity.

The core disciplines of the social sciences include sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science, geography, economics, and, at some institutions, history. But numerous applied social science fields, such as law, business and management, education, social work, urban planning, and criminal justice also exist. In addition, the social sciences include such multi-disciplinary fields such as ethnic studies, women's studies, communication arts, and policy sciences.

As you can see, it is crucial to be clear on your specific responsibilities so that neither selection gaps nor unwanted duplication occurs. Developing regular communication lines with other bibliographers becomes essential.

Bibliographic Structure of Social Science Literature

Citation studies can present a useful picture of the bibliographic structure of a discipline. Though flawed, citation studies can add a piece of the puzzle. Shirley Fitzgibbons, in an essay included in Collection Development in Libraries. A Treatise published in 1982 by JAI Press, presents an excellent review of the literature for citation studies. Her review highlights the differences and similarities among social science disciplines.

The disciplines vary widely in their use of periodicals. For example, nearly 70% of psychologists' citations are to periodicals, while the figures are significantly less for political science and Sociology.

The social sciences also share some commonalities. The primary language of social science research literature is English, though French, German, and Italian social scientists have also made significant contributions. Social scientists are also more dependent upon literature published in the last ten years than are humanists, but this, too, varies depending upon the experimental nature of the sub-field in question.

In addition to trade and scholarly books and periodicals, social scientists often need alternative or nontraditional research materials such as pamphlets and small press monographs from community or social action groups, government publications (local, state, federal, and international), research publications from institutes and academic departments, audio-visual materials, and machine-readable data files.

Selection and Acquisition of Library Materials

Prior to developing a selection strategy, selectors must understand not only the bibliographic structure of a discipline, but also the specific bibliographic needs of their clientele. To sociology as an example, the faculty of some sociology departments may specialize in small group research, educational sociology and family studies. Yet at another institution, faculty research interests may emphasize critical theory, urban political economy and social problems. Because few institutions are able to comprehensively collect material in all areas of the social sciences, you should be familiar with both the institution's special areas of concern and financial limitations. Selectors should consider the types and levels of course offerings, publishing and research activity of the faculty and staff, strengths and weaknesses

of existing collections, cooperative arrangements with other institutions, technical services support for processing and storing alternative materials (e.g., audio-visual materials, data files, pamphlets, etc.), and relationships with other subjects, particularly if other selectors are involved.

The selection and acquisition of materials in social sciences can be an exciting and challenging experience. Frequently, those unfamiliar with either collection development or with selection in the social sciences perceive the selection process as routine and mundane. But contrary to these perceptions, the social science selector must take unique and frequently radical approaches to building collections which reflect not only the contemporary trade and scholarly market but also the more esoteric and ephemeral publications of small presses, social action groups, and research centers.

Monographs. In addition to traditionqal library selection tools such as Choice, Library Journal and the New York Reveiw of Books, the social science selector should consult a wide range of other tools. Before discussing these, however, I would like to suggest a word of caution concerning the Weekly Record as a current selection tool. Publishing output in the social sciences consists of a relatively large number of popular secondary books, many of which are of questionable quality. Yet, due to interest and contemporary relevance, many

of these secondary books must be purchased. This anomally adds to the complexity of selecting sociological materials. You want to provide current, relevant material, but quality can be difficult to discern without reviews.

In order to insure complete coverage of trade monographs, a number of discipline-specific review journals exist which should be reviewed as they are published. These include such titles as Contemporary Sociology, Journal of Economic Literature, PS, and Review in Anthropology.

The time lag for book reviews in all of the sources mentioned above is significant. Consequently, primary selection tools should consist of traditional library reviewing journals, and publishers' catalogs, flyers, and advertisements. In addition, standing order or approval plans help insure that a solid core of materials will be ordered and received in a timely fashion.

Annual reviews of the literature in specific disciplines have some utility for selectors. In sociology, two such reviews exist. The Annual Review of Sociology (v.1- , 1975-.) and Current Sociology. La Sociologie Contemporaine (v.1- , 1952- .) contain original bibliographical essays. While of high quality, the essays themselves have marginal value in the selection of specific titles. Nevertheless, review essays provide concise discussions of current research and trends in sociology.

Periodicals. Because of rising subscription costs, librarians are increasingly selective when considering periodical subscriptions. Thus, to develop and maintain viable periodical collections, communication with faculty, familiarity with their research habits, and familiarity with bibliographic access to periodical literature is essential.

Though primarily intended for use by scholarly writers and reviewers, Political and Social Science Journals: A Handbook for Writers and Reviewers is also useful for identifying journals for possible subscription. It lists more than 400 English-language social science journals published throughout the world. Arranged alphabetically by journal title, complete bibliographic information is provided. Sociology: An International Bibliography of Serial Literature, compiled by Jan Wepsiec, is a comprehensive listing of more than 2,000 serial titles from sociology and its related fields. Ceased as well as current publications are listed. Numerous foreign language periodicals are included.

The "Journal Citation Reports" section of Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) ranks journals by the number of times each is cited annually. Since citation activity is one measure of past use, this tool is useful to consult, particularly if your library cannot support a comprehensive periodical collection in the social sciences

Proceedings and Conference Papers. Proceedings and conference papers are important vehicles for the dissemination of new research. In the last several years, bibliographic access to proceedings and conference papers has improved. The Index to Social Sciences and Humanities Proceedings (v.1- ; 1979- .) comprehensively indexes published proceedings. Before its appearance, many of these publications were not indexed. This source, which is published three times per year, should be reviewed annually. While time consuming, it is time-well spent as it includes proceedings published both commercially and privately. Even though the commercially published proceedings almost always are listed in the Weekly Record when they are first published, privately published proceedings typically are unique to this source.

Sociological Abstracts (SA) and Psychological Abstracts index and abstract papers presented at professional meetings. Unfortunately, many of these papers rarely are compiled and published. The only way to obtain them is to write directly to the authors. Nevertheless, if your library collects preprints and unpublished conference papers, these are indispensable selection tools.

Alternative and Non-Traditional Materials . Alternative and non-traditional materials such as pamphlets, working papers, and reports are essential components of social science collections.

However, bibliographic access to these materials is fragmented. The Weekly Record sporadically lists alternative publications and most traditional library reviewing media ignore them. Typically, materials which are not reviewed or indexed are not purchased. Given the difficulties in identifying this material, selecting and acquiring alternative and non-traditional publications is often an exciting and rewarding challenge. It requires creativity, perserverence, and enthusiasm.

A number of alternative library reviewing sources do exist and you are urged to review them regularly. One such source is Sipapu (1970-), a newsletter published twice per year for librarians and others interested in alternative and radical publications Noel Peattie, the editor, provides ordering information for pamphlets and other publications concerned with the Third World, dissidents, feminism, racism, classism, and other non-establishment issues.

An indispensable tool is Alternatives in Print the "books in print" of alternative publishing. Including books, pamphlets, periodicals, and audio-visual material, its coverage is international. Alternative publications frequently go out of print soon after publication and may be out of print by the time they are listed in Alternatives in Print. Consequently, I suggest that you use this source to build your file of publishers from whom you wish to receive "blurbs", newsletters and catalogs. The Small Press

Record of Books in Print (11th edition. Paradise, CA: Dustbooks, 1982) and its companion volume, The International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses (18th edition. Paradise, CA: Dustbooks, 1982), are also useful. Each has a subject index which enhances its value.

The U.S. Progressive Periodicals Directory (Nashville: Progressive Education Service of the South, 1982) is a fine source which lists 500 progressive periodicals published in the United States by associations and community groups. This is a useful tool for retrospective selection of periodicals. For current alternative periodical selection, I have found Serials Review, Serials Librarian and Bill Katz's "Magazines" section of Library Journal to be enormously helpful.

But it is unwise to rely solely on reviews for alternative material. To keep current with new publications, you must be on the mailing lists of neighborhood associations, community and social action groups, professional associations, and other special interest organizations. Newsletters from these groups are excellent sources for information on their publications.

Two standard reference sources can assist you in this endeavor and should be used in conjunction with Alternatives in Print. The Encyclopedia of Associations is a valuable source for identifying specific voluntary groups. It even indicates if

the groups in question are engaged in any publishing activity. The entries are listed under broad subject categories and a keyword index is also provided. But it, too, is incomplete.

A supplement to the titles above is a relatively new source, Associations Publications in Print published by Bowker, it identifies previously difficult to access materials from thousands of national, state, regional, local and trade associations. Materials listed include pamphlets, newsletters, journals, and free materials.

The Center for Association Publications, Inc. (P.O. Box 2410, Falls Church, VA 22042), the creator of Associations Publications in Print, serves as a purchasing agent or vendor for association publications. Since traditional approval plans do not cover this type of material adequately, working with the Center can save you time and can insure complete coverage.

To identify other potential listings, also consult the Directory of Directories. Arranged by broad subject categories, it identifies specific published directories of organizations, publishers (including small press publishers), and special interest groups.

Publications of independent and university affiliated research centers and academic departments are difficult to identify and are rarely indexed or reviewed. Fortunately, The Research Centers Directory lists more than 6,000 institutes and research centers. Entries, arranged under

broad subject categories, describe how the organization's research results are disseminated. In addition, a good subject index is provided. Again, review this source and develop a list of centers to whose mailing lists you wish your name to be added. UCLA's Center for Afro-American Studies and the University of Wisconsin's Institute for Research on Poverty are examples of the types of centers listed in this directory. Both have active research programs, yet their publications rarely are reviewed in standard sources.

Once you identify alternative publications, an acquisitions strategy must be developed. Some organizations place libraries on a mailing list to receive copies of their publications at no charge. But many others charge a small fee, which must be prepaid. In addition, many alternative groups do not accept orders through jobbers, thus requiring libraries to order directly. These restrictions which frequently give acquisitions departments fits require the development of specific procedures with your acquisitions department. (Danky, 14-15)

Government Publications and Report Literature

Government documents and report literature are primary resource materials for the social sciences. If your institution does not have a government publications unit, to

select appropriate U.S. documents for your collection you should review the Monthly Catalog of Government Publications. Publications of the Departments of Education, Health and Welfare, and Housing and Urban Development are particularly relevant.

A number of microform projects are available which provide access to relevant report literature. The ERIC microfiche for education, the Statistical Reference Index Microfiche Collection, Psychological Documents and NTIS documents all contain useful information. These sets can be subscribed to, or you can order individual documents as needed. If your library does not subscribe to the microfiche collections, you can select needed documents from their published indexes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to emphasize a number of points. First, be creative. Information needed by social science researchers can turn up in the most unusual places.

(Give example of Detroit Free Press
Survey of Blacks in Detroit)

Second, be persistant. Working with alternative organizations can be frustrating. And frequently,

colleagues in our own libraries question our decisions to purchase and retain such material.

Third, maintaining close contact with faculty and community groups is essential, not only to keep us informed of their information needs, but also as a source of ephemeral and difficult to obtain publications.

(Give example of SDS files and Special Collections)

While I love my current position, I, unfortunately, no longer am able to do selection. I loved being an information detective and considered it an exhilerating challenge.